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342 Another kind of phatskha, in the form of an irregular rectangular, is constructed as follows. Two chestnut poles are driven into the ground at the front door in such a way that the upper ends touch each other. The Abkhaz call them amakratl-khkva (scissors). On the side opposite the "scissors" another pole is driven in; a beam is laid on top of the "scissors" and this pole, and the roof rests on it. The roof of such a phatskha can be flat or sloping. Such a phatskha can be built in any size. A passage is made in front of it, and in the back there is a special com-
[233] partment for storing all kinds of utensils and for keeping the cattle in winter. The walls of the phatskha are not covered; only in winter are they now and then covered with ferns. Therefore the walls are easily penetrated by light, and at the same time by cold and rain.

354 Inside the house, in the middle of the phatskha, is the
[252] hearth (akhushtaara), made of clay or hewn stone. Above the
[415] hearth cast-iron kettles are suspended from the ceiling on hoops; in these the food is cooked. The Abkhaz try to maintain a permanent fire in the hearth. The smoke escapes through the roof, but on windy days it remains circling inside the room; therefore the phatskha, and especially the upper part of it, is
352 covered with soot. On one side of the phatskha there is a couch; near the hearth stands a long and fairly wide bench, which sometimes also serves as a couch. The bedding is arranged on the couch; nearby stands a trunk, where all the necessary articles are kept. On the wall hang a saddle, a whip, and some
415 of the /17/ weapons. In a corner, close to the wall, are the utensils for preparing ghomi; in this same corner are baskets for provisions, wooden or horn spoons and cups hang on the wall, while milk-pails and troughs, etc. stand on the floor. Basins and pitchers are rarely found; instead of a pitcher, a gourd
412 is used. A few implements must be added to all this: a flat stone used as a mortar, and a whetstone. And that is the whole domestic inventory of the Abkhaz of average means.

342 The large quadrangular phatskha serves as the main family
● 585 dwelling, while the conical one (khkvatsu) serves as a lodging for

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342 newly-married couples. The poor sometimes have only one
[585] small house.

262 The ordinary daily food of the Abkhaz consists of cheese, corn bread, ghomi, and sour milk. The ghomi is prepared with cheese (aelagzh), or with milk and cheese (achamukhkua). In winter the Abkhaz contents himself with cooked meat; goat's meat is preferred. Doing without wine is no problem to him as long as there is sour milk. The Abkhaz hates crawfish; formerly he also disliked fish, but is now gradually becoming accustomed to eating it; there are also certain vegetables that are not eaten,
[263] but the Abhaz likes food that is spiced with bitter herbs and pepper, etc. For occasions of prayer cone-shaped loaves of bread are baked, which are later boiled, in water during Lent and at other times in milk. These loaves are called arvazha.

592 The rights of seniority are strictly observed in the Abkhaz family. All the members of the household obey their pater familias (avn aihab). In the family everything is done according to his orders and wishes; only in matters concerning women does the oldest woman in the family (avn eihab aphs) take command. The younger members always act according to the instructions of the older ones, but if a younger member of the family is cleverer or more experienced than one of superior age, then for all practical purposes things are arranged according to his wishes and instructions.

The oldest (man and woman) in the home perform all re-
[888] ligious rites and prayers. The oldest man also performs all
[593] family rites. Sons take care of their aged parents with great love; they usually do not leave the parental home as long as the parents are alive. If a separation takes place, the parents are
428 given half of the entire property. In case the property is divided
[592] between a mother and her sons, the mother gets, in addition to her dowry, a share equal to that of each of her sons; she then /18/ settles with one of her sons, as she sees fit. The oldest brother is alloted a special share for his seniority (aihabshakhu). If there are many cattle, this special share will consist of one head of each kind of cattle; if there is not much, then only one, the best, is given. The youngest brother also gets a special share

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565 they are prepared to sacrifice their lives for him if necessary.
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[579] When a ward dies, the grief and sorrow of the foster parents
[964] are unbounded; for his funeral they furnish a shroud and money;
[965] they also bring one or two bulls, sheep, etc. for the funeral repast for the deceased. When their ward marries, they give
● [585] him all kinds of assistance through their personal labor. They also present him with fattened animals and bring presents to his bride as well.

608 Among the Abkhaz another type of wardship also exists,
565 namely, that of an adult man being invited to assume the role
796 of ward. The Abkhaz peasant invites such a man with the words, "I wish to take you into my house and honor you according to my means." On the appointed day, the person invited goes to the house of his future foster father and takes along a few additional people. During the supper the host and his relatives kneel down in front of their ward-to-be and give him a glass of wine; they then stand and one of them addresses to him the following speech: "From this day on we regard you as having been nursed in our family; we are of the same spirit as you and will begrudge you nothing; we hope that you, too, will begrudge us nothing; you will be held in higher esteem than the other wards." After this they present him with a few rubles and give something to his companions (khadzh /see foreign text/). While handing over the presents, they say, "Vadcha enup" (a present for you). This ceremony ends in the following way: on a carpet, spread on the floor, a chest is placed, on which the wife of the host of the house, i.e., the future foster mother, seats herself; the other women surround her. Then the ward-to-be enters through the open door, stands in front of the hostess seated on the chest, greets her, /23/ and thrice touches with his lips the nipple of her breast, or, as the Abkhaz say, "bites her nipples three times"; after each time he repeats, "from this day on you are my own mother." And indeed, from
608 this time on exactly the same mutual relations obtain between
565 them as in the first case where another's child is fully reared. It need hardly be said that, besides the princes and nobles, the

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584 from which she does not emerge until a feast is held in the big house. Then she is led into the house, and one of the elderly friends of the family, or the father himself, puts a piece of liver on a spit and begins to pray and to express wishes that the couple before him may be happy, prolific, etc.

When the groom returns from the house of his bride's parents to that of his father, he again is not allowed to show himself to his parents and older relatives. This, too, would be considered /25/ indecent. He does not appear until after the feast has been given by his father. Now the same blessings and wishes that were given when the bride was led out of her amhara are repeated, and the groom gives presents to his mother, father, uncle, foster father, and in general to all older relatives. This feast bears the name aphkhasharkhe (portion of shame, remover of shame).

• 585 [583] After the preparation of the dowry, the bride's parents invite their future son-in-law in order to entrust their daughter to him; at the appointed time the groom comes to get her with his friends and her girl-friends. On the way home with the bride, [533] the marriage song bedniera (happiness) is sung, there is trick-[526] riding on horses, pistol-shooting, etc. When they are approaching the house of the groom, they send someone ahead to announce the arrival of the bride to the groom's father and mother. Such a messenger stops somewhere near the gates of the house and [202] without a word fires a pistol in the air. In the house he is offered some honey or sugar.

Meanwhile the wedding procession reaches the house. Here the friends and girl-friends amuse themselves for a while with a huge round loaf of wheaten bread, throwing it three times over the bride and over the house and breaking it into pieces, which are picked up by those present. After this the bride is led into the house, at the entrance of which two men hold swords crossed overhead. At the threshold she is offered honey or sugar, with the words, "May God give you a tongue as sweet." After the bride enters the house she is handed a cup filled with grains of gomi, on top of which an egg has been placed. Then she is led three times around the hearth while she scatters the grains of gomi. The bride is then seated, and they hand her a little boy

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585 as a sort of prediction that she, too, will give birth to a boy. A little later the bride is brought to the separate small house (amhara), and then the real wedding-feast begins.

On the second and third days the relatives come, meet the bride, and bring her presents, each according to his means. When they want to get acquainted with the bride, a friend of hers, her delegate (dade), lifts from her face the veil with which she is covered; the visitors greet the bride, and she, without saying a word, stands erect and quietly, with her eyes lowered. The responses are not made by her, but by her friend. When sufficient time has elapsed after the wedding, /26/ she answers questions addressed to her, but, instead of saying "yes" or "no," she only shakes her head.

The young bride remains in the amhara for some months; [592] then she is invited into the main house, and from this time on the whole care of the household is put on her shoulders. She always tries to satisfy her parents-in-law and to act according to their wishes. For several months she does not speak to anyone; afterwards she begins to speak, first to the younger people in the house and in the village, and later on also to the older ones, and last of all to her parents-in-law. The young bride is referred to by all the villagers as "our daughter-in-law"; they bring her various kinds of sewing-work, which she does without reward.

602 For many years the young couple avoids being seen together by the husband's parents, and they cannot eat together [606] [269] in their presence as long as they live. In conversation with older people, whether relatives or strangers, the wife cannot refer to her husband as "my husband," nor the husband to his wife as "my wife." The daughter-in-law may not sit down on the bench on [606] which her father-in-law or mother-in-law have been seated. [551] The wife can never call her husband by name and in cases of necessity manages instead with the pronouns "you" and "he." In the same way, she does not call by name her brother-in-law, her husband's foster parents, members of the family, the village elders, etc. The husband, on the other hand, only

avoids

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755 782 unnoticed by the occupants of the house of the sick, takes some object belonging to the sick person, e.g., a dress, etc., and goes to the river. Standing on the bank, she says, "Mother of the Water, mistress, if the sick person was bound by you, unbind him"; she then touches the water three times with the object belonging to the sick person and scoops up a few drops of it with alder leaves, which she carefully carries home, where she fastens them to the ceiling above the hearth, convinced that the fever will then disappear like the water in the leaves; then she runs out of the house with the words, "May your sickness also run away like this."

[756] If the sick person feels relief after this, a praying-woman is invited in, a hen and a rooster are prepared with a stuffed loaf of unleavened bread, and three candles are molded, which are distributed in the following manner: the hen and one candle are allotted to the "Mother of the Water," the rooster and the second candle to her husband, and the third candle to their maid-servant, called Abzahav-Abzachav (benefactress). The sick person goes to the water with the praying-woman and kneels down. The praying-woman takes a candle, lights it and places it near the water, and addresses a prayer for the relief of the sick person to the "Mother of the Water" -- dzdzlan dzahvvazh khiphsha gvasha ("Mother of the Water," "mistress of the water," Khiphsha Gvasha); she lights another candle and makes the same request of the "lord husband" of the "Mother of the Water, finally she sets in place the third lighted candle and begs the maid-servant to serve as intercessor and mediator for the afflicted one with her "masters." Then she passes her hand over the sick person's back and gives him "azati" (liberty) from his ailment.

782 585 844 A similar ceremony is performed for the young bride on the occasion when she is for the first time "led out to the water" (i.e., taken to fetch water); it is also performed for a woman in labor so that she may have plentiful milk. In this case, if the ceremony cannot be performed in full, an egg for the "Mother of the Water" is thrown into the water during the prayer.

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The Prayer Ceremony in Honor of Azhahara

The Abkhaz call the protector or genius of the house and hearth by the name Azhahara in whose honor is performed the ceremony for a young married couple in the stage of their marriage before they have appeared together before their elders and the young woman is for the first time led into her husband's main house, or when the bride is invited into her father's house. One of the oldest members of the family sticks pieces of the heart and liver of a sacrificial animal on a spit and begs Azhahara to protect the young couple at home and out of doors.

8.

Alishkantra

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Alishkantra is the "mistress" of dogs. In the opinion of the Abkhaz, the owner of good dogs will also be fortunate in the multiplication of his cattle; good fortune in dogs is associated with good fortune in all domestic animals. Therefore before praying to other god-protectors of domestic and wild animals, the Abkhaz prays to Alishkantra to grant him luck with good dogs and the opportunity to raise and breed them.

9.

/45/ A Prayer in Honor of Zhabran

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Zhabran is the protector of animals. Every Abkhaz owning cattle performs the prayer-ceremony in his honor on "Cheese Saturday." For this they prepare suluguni (a big cheese) called "sacred cheese"; bread dough is placed on the hearth, in which a man puts a core of suluguni, whereupon he prays, "Prefer me to all those pronouncing your name;

[760 cont.]
and noblemen and who had thus [761] become noble themselves; and serfs (tso'kŏtl). The last were either peasants and could not be sold individually, or they were servants and were sometimes freed (begaulia). The peasants had to attend to the needs and obligations of the nobles, and these to those of the princes, but in return received gifts from them. In the case of disputes and on important occasions, princes, noblemen, and respected peasants took council together. This feudal system was most highly developed in Kabarda, and the Kabardin were the teachers of the neighboring peoples as far as mode of living, horsemanship, dress, and weapons were concerned. A pronounced aristocratic pride prevailed among the Cherkess, and their noblemen considered themselves as high as the princes of the Abkhaz and others. Therefore, at marriage the greatest weight was placed on equality of birth; sons of the princes by serf girls could become princes only through marriage with princesses, and then only princes of third degree.

The Cherkess sold many of the serfs and slaves to Turkey, where the Cherkess women were sought for their beauty; they were never daughters of the princes or noblemen, however, who were only to be won by their peers through marriage and bride price, but rather, except for personal slaves, they dealt in Abkhaz women and captives from the Cossacks and other enemy peoples. Slaves could achieve freedom through marriage to a Cherkess woman or through adoption; this was accomplished by having the slave, as mentioned above, suckle at the breast of the woman in question in the presence of the senior member of the kin group (cf. p. 76 ).

Marriage. Up to fifty years ago among the Abkhaz the young men, accompanied by friends, used to steal a girl of equal rank whom they desired as a wife. Today the abduction takes place by an understanding with the girl or her parents, but usually the suitor works through a mediator (dade) or female matchmaker and pays a purchase price, besides the reciprocal gifts. Refusal of the offer results in abduction or alienation of the kin group.

After the betrothal banquet the groom remains for three days in the bride's house or in the vicinity, but he may not

A 585 [761 cont.] eat with her people or show his face, which he conceals with the hood of his coat. The bride now stays for a time in a special hut (amhaza), after which a feast is arranged and she is blessed by the father of the house; the same is done for the groom when he returns to his father's house (apʻkhašarkhe = removal of shame). The customs at the wedding, which takes place after the trousseau is completed, are almost the same as among the Osset (see p. 76 ). The young bride continues to live in the aforementioned small hut and may not speak with anyone. The young married couple may not visit the parents of the groom at the same time for several years afterward, and the two of them may never eat with them at the same time. The man may never utter his wife's name, nor she that of her husband or those of his relatives, in front of others.

A [606] [593] [607] [551]

C 583 582 [762] Among the Cherkess, too, girls are seldom stolen now; the bride is acquired for money and animals. The men marry from fifteen to twenty-five, the girls from twelve to sixteen years of age. During courtship (nakekh) the priest (mollah) completes the marriage contract after closure of the sale, as among the Mohammedan Abkhaz, whereby he joins the hands of the representatives of the bride's people. About two months later the purchase price is turned over, and soon thereafter the two- to three-week wedding festivities take place, with which are associated several peculiar customs preserved best in Kabarda.

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C 585 The custom is so closely connected to the former abduction and defense by the kin group that, after the appearance of the bride, her mounted escorts defend themselves with their knouts against the youths, who stand in front of the house and attempt to unhorse them with poles until they succeed in jumping over the fence and gaining entrance to the house.

The groom is taken in for the wedding days as a "foster-son" (kan) by another kin group, from which he is assigned an escort (šatso-kot) of his own age, who attends him, hides him, since he is not allowed to meet older men until the "reconciliation" (see below), watches near him during the night, and rides about with him in the daytime in the hill pastures; here he gives him animals (šaga = for roasting), which he gives his people and